

hills at a cost of Re. 1 per ton. That practice was now abolished and they were asked to purchase fuel from the Nagercoil depot at a cost of Rs. $6\frac{1}{4}$ per ton. The cost to Government in collecting the fuel was about Rs. $4\frac{1}{2}$ per ton and the people living near the hills had to cart away the fuel purchased from the depot to the valley of those hills at an additional cost. The forest authorities recently agreed to give them fuel at the depot at Rs. 5 per ton, deducting from the sale price the cart-hire which the people were required to pay in addition. He thought that the gain to the Government was very slight compared with the loss which the people were put to. He therefore prayed that the original permit system might be ordered to be revived.

He also represented that the permission granted to the people to remove green manure from, and to pasture their cattle on, the slopes of the Veerapuli hills had not the desired benefit as the hills lay to the entire north of the taluk and contained very few green manure trees. The Member therefore prayed that the people of the taluk might be permitted on a free pass system to remove green manure and head-loads of fuel from the hills nearest to the habitations of people.

Dewan's reply.—A fuel depot will be opened at Darsanamcope. The other representations of the Member are noted for consideration.

20. Forest administration in Travancore.

Mr. T. Kumara Pillai (Member, Kalkulam taluk) said that the defects of the administration of the forests in Travancore were brought to the notice of the Government during the last three sessions of the Assembly. The representations were, in due course, forwarded to the Conservator for report. On the reports submitted by him, proceedings were issued accepting his views and his reasons without allowing the Members a second voice. The Member expressed as his view that such decisions on the mere reports of the heads of departments would not in general mend matters.

Proceeding to his subject, he said that about one-third of the area of Travancore consisted of reserved forests and reserved lands but the revenue to the Government and the benefits to the people bore no adequate proportion. The scientific conservation of the forests was the most essential thing in the administration of forests. Though there was not efficient conservation in the earlier years, proper precautions were taken to regulate the felling of timber. With that object in view, the Government were insisting on the Conservator from 1070 to the working plans prepared of all the reserved forests. In 1082, i. e., after 12 years, the Shendurni working plan, which was the first of its kind, was sanctioned. A review of the progress of the working plan system in respect of other working circles would be instructive. In the Administration Report of 1084, it was stated that an experienced Ranger was directed to inspect the forests of the Southern Division and that his report was under the consideration of the Conservator when the year closed. In the Report for 1088, it was stated that a working plan report of the Southern Division was prepared in the beginning of 1087 and that the same was under scrutiny by the Conservator. Nothing was known to have been done further till the close of 1090. The Member was at a loss to understand what had become of the report prepared by the Special officer. Again, the preliminary operations for the preparation of a working plan in respect of the sandalwood trees in Anjanad were begun in 1085 but the report was submitted to the Government in 1088 only and was sanctioned. Nothing material was done under the sanctioned plan till the close of 1090. Again, the Report for 1084 stated that working plans in respect of the Kulathupuzha and Yerur Reserves were nearing completion, but nothing further was known about them. In regard to the Malayattur Reserve, the preparation of a working plan was started in 1087 but did not appear to have been completed or sanctioned. Similar tardiness was observable in the preparation of working plans in respect of other working circles also. It was regrettable that, with such a large staff in the department, it was not found possible to submit to Government a single working plan of royal trees were now barren tracts with very little of tree growth. Even in former years, the felling was thought to be excessive as was evident from Mr. Bourdillon's

Report, para 1282, and the number of trees felled was being systematically reduced from 1070 to 1084. From 1084, the figures showed a reversal of policy, because there were increased fellings from year to year, the quantity felled in 1090 being nearly double that in 1083. The Government were complimenting the Conservators for increase of revenue but the fact remained that it all meant a denudation of the forests, quite against recognised principles of forest conservancy and the policy advocated by Mr. Bourdillon. The Conservators were only anxious to show some increase in the receipts during their time by any means and did not, he regretted to say, care for the real interests of the forests in the future.

The Member next proposed to show that the supervision of the department over the felling of trees was defective. The contractors' men felled every kind of tree, old and young, good and bad, they came across, but carted away only the best among them. The remaining trees left unremoved by them in the forests were known under the designation of "abandoned timber", and they figured as an item of receipts from 1081 onwards. The receipts under the head were steadily increasing in recent years. The total receipts under that head from 1081 to 1089 were over ten lakhs of rupees and the net receipts exceeded 5½ lakhs. It was impossible to form even a rough estimate of the actual loss such reckless and uncontrolled fellings caused to Government.

The Member then dealt with the receipts of the department. In 1075 11,68,932 cubic feet of timber removed from the forests were sold for Rs. 4,77,259 while in 1088, 12,17,595 cubic feet of timber removed from the forests were sold for Rs. 10,85,395. That would show that the so-called increase of revenue was really due to the inordinate enhancement of the tariff rates for timber. There was a slight increase in the receipts from other items, also due to the raising of the price of fuel, charcoal, bamboo, etc., to the detriment of the ryot. It was therefore abundantly clear that the sources of forest revenue had not been developed. No attempt was made for finding out the existence and use of the numerous articles of minor forest produce in the forests and developing the income under that head. He quoted the case of a contractor who was permitted to collect minor forest produce from the Veerapuli Reserve on payment of Rs. 300 for 1091, but who got, during three months, produce to the value of Rs. 1,500. The receipts under minor forest produce were capable of infinite development. If the removal and sale of timber constituted the entire work of the department, the Member doubted whether such a large establishment was necessary for it.

The Member then discussed the policy of the Government regarding the removal of teak from the forests. In the Report for 1087, it was stated that the gradual improvement in the collection and disposal of junglewood and the decrease in that of teak was a distinct improvement which was persistently aimed at because the stock of teak in the forests had considerably decreased and what remained had therefore to be conserved and fostered; in the Report for 1088, that the policy approved by the Conservator and the Government was to conserve and foster the royal trees remaining; and in the Report for 1089, that the policy of the department of late had been to minimise the extraction of royal trees as far as possible. He quoted the figures under extractions in the years 1082 to 1090 and the prices realized and argued that the avowed policy was never put into practice by the department nor insisted on by the Government as the quantity removed had increased from 3,92,555 c. ft. in 1082 to 6,05,186 c. ft. in 1090, but the price realized was only Rs. 4,71,279 in 1090, against Rs 3,30,602 in 1082 in spite of the circumstance that the tariff rates had been nearly doubled during the period. The fact was that the bulk of the timber was disposed of to outsiders in whole lots for nominal prices. The average realisation per cubic foot of teak was 13½ as. in 1082, against only 10½ as. in 1090. It was high time to enquire into the reason for such a low price. The timber was not available to local consumers even at tariff rates. The Member dwelt at length on the difficulties of the people in purchasing timber when it was sold in one lot and requested that arrangements should be made to sell them in small lots at frequent intervals and also in retail at the depot for tariff rates.

Devan.—The Government have already sanctioned the daily sales of timber from the depots at tariff rates.

The Member next referred to the large stock of timber remaining unsold in the depots at the close of the year and the nature of their disposal. The quantity remaining unsold at the depots was steadily increasing from less than four lakhs of cubic feet in 1086 to more than ten lakhs in 1090. Referring to that, it was said in the Report for 1088 that “holding over a large quantity at the end of every year and spreading its disposal over a longer period intervening between Karkadakam and Vrischikam” was distinctly more advantageous as by so doing better prices could be secured than “when sales were rushed and this should therefore be adhered to generally as the ruling policy of the department in disposing of timber in the State sale-depots.” It was regrettable to see that the policy enunciated was never adhered to by the department. To show increased receipts, sales were rushed before the year expired. The month of Karkadakam was a particularly unfavourable month for the agricultural ryots of the State when they could not afford to go in for the purchase of timber, but the timber was being sold away then at half the tariff rates to foreign capitalists to the disadvantage of the people and at a considerable loss to the Government. In the Report for 1089, the Conservator complained that the stock in Viyapuram depot did not sell before the year closed in spite of repeated advertisements for sale. It was understood that the stock was conveyed to the Quilon water-depot and sold to a foreigner at 40 % of the tariff value. The people of the land would have purchased the whole quantity, if it was sold in small lots and the Government would also have realised a larger profit.

Devan.—As a matter of fact, various attempts were made by the Conservator to find a better sale but he did not succeed. Even sales, depot by depot, were found to be unsuccessful.

Proceeding to consider the expenditure on account of the department, he said that, from 1081 to 1089, the expenditure had risen from Rs. 4,60,410 to Rs. 8,58,881; while the corresponding increase in the receipts was chiefly attributable to the raising of the tariff value on timber. Further, the amount spent in 1090 for the conservation of the forests was only Rs. 23,832. The amount spent during the eleven years from 1080 to 1090 for the opening up of the forests by the construction of roads was only Rs. 98,938. Another useful and necessary item of expenditure was the construction of quarters for officers in the interior of the forests and the amount spent under that head during the period of eleven years was only Rs. 1,73,538. The stinting of expenditure to show surplus net receipts had resulted in increasing the cost of exploiting timber from the forests year after year. He strongly pleaded the necessity for spending much greater amounts for increasing the wealth of the forests, and also in opening up the forests, so that the forests may become accessible for exploitation and scientific conservancy. The cost on establishment was prodigious. If it should be considered that the officers already entertained could not be sent away, the extra officers might very well be employed on the preparation of working plans, etc.

He advocated the desirability of re-imposing export duty on timber and fuel. If the export duty was abolished with a view to attract foreign purchasers, the same advantage could be secured by reviving the duty and reducing the tariff rates to the extent of that duty. If export duty was imposed, there was the safeguard that another department of the State would also check the quantities transported outside Travancore and he thought that was imperatively necessary for various reasons. Even if the Government considered that the duty could not be re-imposed, or a lighter duty levied, arrangements should at least be made with the Excise Department to check and record the exports of timber and fuel outside the State.

The Member next dwelt at length on the hardships experienced by the people, owing to the unsympathetic treatment accorded by the department. The question of free pass was the most serious hardship. It was necessary to remove the watch stations in the plains to the borders of the reserves and reserved lands and the hardship complained of would then be minimised. He referred to para 2 of the revised rules regulating the grant of free passes, which required that an application for a free

pass should be accompanied by the village proverticar's certificate of registry of the land, as well as by attested copies of survey sketches indicating the limits of the lands stated in the application with the particulars of surrounding registered holdings, etc. The department informed the Government that the delay in the issue of free passes could be avoided if the applicants would maintain clear and well-defined boundaries in respect of the holdings from which timber was to be removed. On that plea, the Government insisted on the presentation of survey sketches, etc., with the applications for free passes. The rule worked greater hardships on the people.

Dewan.—What is the remedy you suggest? I am willing to adopt any suggestion you make which is feasible. Certainly, there may be difficulties.

Member.—The watch stations in the plains should be removed to the frontiers of reserves and passes should be insisted on only for the timber and fuel that had to pass through those stations.

Dewan.—I shall consider the suggestion.

The Member, continuing, said that generally only lands lying contiguous to the reserved forests or reserved lands had their boundaries not well-defined and that was due to the fault of the Revenue Department in not clearly demarcating the boundaries of puduvals at the time of their registry. Even in cases of registered holdings lying contiguous to reserves, it was not desirable to insist on sketches. As the application for free pass would show the survey number of the holding in which timber was stored, the site could be clearly ascertained by the department with the help of the settlement register and litho-plans, and if the holding was contiguous to reserves, the forest officers could well inspect the locality and satisfy themselves that the land did not form part of any Government forests. The system of passes was obviously introduced with a view to protect the Government forests and the people should not in fairness be put to any difficulties or needless expense in removing the timber or fuel from their own registered lands. A decent sum was being annually spent for the demarcation of the boundaries of the reserves. The utmost that the Government could have meant was that the sketches should be produced in respect of such lands as lay contiguous to reserves or reserved lands, as the want of well-defined boundaries in the case of holdings in the plains remote from the reserves would not affect the forests in any way. As a fact, the boundaries between private lands were quite clear and well-defined. The process of obtaining sketches was by no means easy, for, the people had to spend money for them. The production of sketches should therefore be dispensed with, or at least restricted to cases of lands adjoining reserved forests or reserved lands. In the case of holdings for the removal of timber from which free passes were already issued, it was not reasonable to insist on sketches, etc., for a further application. But the Forest Department contended that, on the strength of a previous pass, a subsequent pass could not be issued without fulfilling all the conditions required by the rules. The proverticar's certificates could also be procured only after much delay and expense. But applications submitted after all the above formalities were gone through received no prompt attention but were unduly delayed by the department and the Member said he could quote many instances of extraordinary delays. One Mallan Narayanan of Kottarathu zeedu, Pulla desom, Mekode pakuthi, applied for a pass for the removal of timber from survey No. 17 of Tiruvattar pakuthi on the 21st Chingam 1091. He was directed to present a sketch on the 4th Kanni and the sketch was accordingly presented at the Ranger's office on the 11th. He put in a further petition on the 15th Thulam and again on the 8th Vrischikam describing the difficulties he was subjected to on account of the delay in obtaining the pass. After a further period of 41 days the party presented at the Division office at Trivandrum and sought for the pass. The officer in charge directed the Head clerk to issue the pass. As the party understood that there was further difficulty, he applied for copies of the records which were also not given. On the 14th Makaram 1091, the party put in a petition to the Huzur, detailing all the above facts. Again, the Member himself applied for a free pass on the 25th Dhanu 1089 but had not obtained the same yet. He quoted also the case of Mr. C. V. Raman Pillai, an influential retired officer, who got a pass only after a period of six months. The